



Natural grassland and oak tree
Wrexham Industrial Estate

Landscape and Industrial Development

This is one of a series of local planning guidance notes amplifying development plan proposals in a clear and concise format with the objective of improving design standards. It is intended that this guidance will help applicants to have a better understanding of the landscape and environmental issues which the Council will take account of when determining applications for industrial development. A high quality of design can improve the image of the business, attract quality staff and encourage investment. The note will form a material consideration in the determination of all relevant planning applications.

These guidelines cannot cover all situations, and applicants and agents are invited to discuss proposals with the landscape officer prior to the formal submission of an application. For large developments, or difficult sites, applicants are advised to employ a professionally qualified landscape architect from the outset and to submit as much relevant information as possible with the application.

General considerations

Wrexham's industrial estates, smaller industrial sites, and retail and business parks make a very noticeable contribution to the landscape of the County Borough, and this can be a positive one. New development in particular can provide excellent opportunities for exciting and sustainable landscape and building design, providing attention is paid to the impact which such proposals might have on the surroundings.

Landscape considerations include the way the external environment is affected by the development, and the way the development is perceived by the public. Landscape needs to be considered from the very beginning of the development process.

Much of the advice contained in local planning guidance note no. 7 'Landscape and Development', to which applicants are also referred, will be relevant to industrial development, particularly the advice on what needs to be submitted as part of the planning application. Information Sheets on a range of landscape topics are available from the Planning Department, and reference can be made, on request, to detailed assessment reports on Wrexham and Llay industrial estates. Site development briefs may have been prepared by the Planning Department for major employment sites.



Aerial view of Wrexham Industrial Estate

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Available in
alternative formats



Hedgerows and trees retained in this North Wales business park

General design and appearance of industrial and commercial development

Landscape is not just tree and shrub planting, although this may be desirable or even essential on some sites. Improving the design and colour of buildings and fences, and keeping and protecting existing trees and wildlife may often be more important. Industrial plant, service and utility features need not necessarily be concealed as they may provide interest in otherwise bland or mediocre settings, particularly if attention is paid to their appearance as well as to the main buildings.

It is often easy to improve security fences, large expanses of tarmac, large areas of parking, small scale clutter, and storage areas at relatively low cost. Very large scale buildings or structures are more difficult - they can often be seen from a long way away and at close quarters can dwarf the human figure. Their construction may involve loss of habitat for wildlife. Planting of wide tree belts, replacement of lost habitats, and measures to store rainfall may be needed to help reduce the environmental impact, and it is important that sufficient space is allowed for this at the site planning stage, (see back page). Good design and colour are also very important in making large industrial buildings fit into the landscape.

In rural or semi-rural areas the appearance of the business premises should be in keeping with the character of the local countryside. This may be achieved by re-using existing buildings, using local materials and colours for new development, and by protecting existing trees and hedgerows. Where the need for a visibility splay at a new access point results in hedgerow removal, the hedgerows should always be replaced on the new line.

The needs of the employees should always be taken into account when considering a landscape scheme - their working environment can affect health and well-being. This is particularly important when the business is located on a site which is a long way away from transport, shops and other facilities. For instance, a sheltered but sunny outdoor sitting area with a pleasant outlook will be appreciated for coffee and lunch breaks.

Actions which will make a big difference to industrial landscapes

<p>DO place security fencing where really needed, to reduce crime.</p> <p>DO use dark green polyester powder coated mesh, palisade or vertical bar fencing with posts of the same colour. Black, or deep shades of other colours may also be used, giving scope for corporate identity.</p>	<p>DON'T use galvanised steel palisade fencing, or chain link fencing with concrete posts and barbed wire, and especially not on frontages.</p> <p>DON'T put security fencing next to pavements as it will dominate the view from the road. If needed on frontages leave at least 1m for hedging, shrubs or climbers.</p>
<p>DO plant oak trees, other large native tree species, and hedges, and always protect existing trees, shrubs and wildflower meadow (especially species-rich grassland on Wrexham Industrial Estate).</p>	<p>DON'T replace valuable existing grassland, hedges, scrub, woodland or trees with 'amenity' planting of low wildlife value (and higher cost)</p>
<p>DO spread surplus soil to gentle contours or remove from site.</p> <p>DO look after topsoil by keeping vehicles etc. away from it - it is a living material, and if damaged will not be good for planting.</p>	<p>DON'T create steep-sided high mounds or angular bunds unless there is a very good reason - they are difficult to plant and maintain, and can look unsightly.</p>
<p>DO use medium - dark colours for cladding, fencing and structures so that they blend with the landscape (not the sky)</p>	<p>DON'T use light reflective colours for buildings as it will make them much more conspicuous in the wider landscape</p>
<p>DO budget adequately for landscape work and ongoing maintenance.</p>	<p>DON'T forget about landscape construction and maintenance costs - they are a very small proportion of the budget, but vital</p>
<p>DO retain and protect watercourses and ponds</p>	<p>DON'T develop within 5m of watercourses</p>

Signage

Check whether there is already an integrated system of signage for an industrial estate, which will help to create an estate or zone identity, as well as making it easier to find businesses. Also check whether advertisement consent is required for new signage.

Business signage must be situated within the curtilage of the site, outside visibility splays, and where it does not conflict with essential highway or directional signs. In general the size should be restricted to the maximum necessary to be readable. A mixture of upper and lower case letters is most easily read, as is text in light colours on a dark background. Good signage can enhance an otherwise bland building or site, and provide focal points in the landscape.

Lighting

Good lighting provision is essential for the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians, for the security of premises, materials and workforce, occasionally for display, and for information such as signage. Lighting design should however avoid excessive levels of light, resulting in sky glow (upward waste of light), glare (uncomfortable brightness), and light trespass (spill beyond property boundary).

Opportunities for planting:

Note: plant lists are available on request. It is important to check first whether existing habitats are of ecological value.

Areas unsuitable for development:

- Plant with native woodland species.

Vacant land awaiting development:

- Plant with species with possible commercial value such as short term crops suitable for fuel, horticultural mulch or chipboard e.g. willow or poplar, or medium term crops suitable for coppicing to produce fence posts, tree stakes or logs e.g. sweet chestnut.

Boundaries:

- Hedgerow planting, including hedgerow trees. Consider using as an alternative to fencing.
- Climbing plants next to fences and walls

Frontages

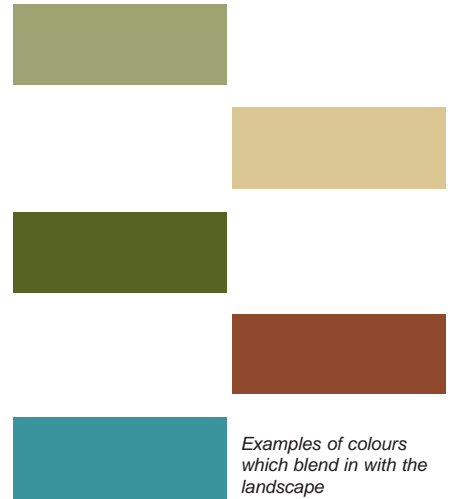
- Opportunities for more decorative planting if desired.
- Use planting to soften carparking and clutter, and to enhance entrances.

Blank walls of industrial buildings and sheds:

- Self-clinging climbers
- Background for groups of trees.

Grant aid for landscape works

Availability of grant aid towards environmental enhancement on industrial estates varies from year to year, but advice on the current situation can be obtained by contacting the Planning Environment Section. Groundwork Wrexham and Flintshire (Tel. 01978 363555) are also able to advise businesses on design, and eligibility of schemes for grant aid.



'Paladin' security fencing

Related information available from the Planning Department:

Local Planning Guidance Notes:

- No. 1 Advertisements
- No. 7 Landscape and Development
- No. 17 Trees and Development
- No. 22 Sustainable Building

A forthcoming LPG Note on Design will cover general design principles, including landscape design.

Biodiversity Action Plans are also available, including one on Derelict Land, which may be relevant for brownfield sites.

Site planning for Industrial and Commercial sites

The Welsh Development Agency recommends that a Site Environmental Management Plan is prepared, together with a biodiversity audit, an analysis of possible hazards, and an assessment of hydrology and drainage. The following table includes the landscape factors which will be considered when a planning application for an industrial or commercial site is assessed:

Topic	Recommendation
Survey	<p>Note physical characteristics, opportunities and constraints. An accurate plan of the site to a known scale is needed (to be submitted as part of the planning application).</p> <p>Check with the Planning Environment Section whether an ecological survey involving habitats and/or protected species will be needed. In some cases a European protected species licence is required. Tree surveys, soil surveys or level surveys may be needed.</p>
Retention of existing vegetation	<p>Plan footprint of development as far as possible to retain existing trees, hedges, areas of nature existing features conservation or archaeological interest.</p> <p>In phased developments retain existing vegetation until additional land is required.</p>
Wildlife networks	<p>Link existing site features of nature conservation value such as watercourses, wetland and semi-natural vegetation with new planting and open space, and with external areas and corridors of nature conservation value. Ensure protected species and existing habitats are maintained.</p> <p>Avoid culverting or diverting watercourses, and retain minimum 5m wide buffer for wildlife and maintenance wherever possible.</p>
Existing waste,	<p>Check with Contaminated Land Officer. Treat any contamination on site if possible, limiting contamination impact on surrounding areas, and only remove waste to an approved landfill site.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Encourage lower car use through provision of cycle shelters, cycle paths, bus shelters etc.</p> <p>Use low energy input construction techniques and local materials where possible, designing structures to be flexible in use, or energy efficient to build and demolish when no longer required.</p> <p>Take into account building orientation to maximise solar gain, shelter and improvements to microclimate through planting, avoidance of shaded and frost-prone areas for areas of high use, use of natural daylight.</p> <p>Ensure that the layout includes for storage of materials for recycling</p> <p>Consider green roofs where low maintenance planting is used over the roof area</p> <p>Manage surface water to maximise water absorption within the site, with minimal run-off to sewers through use of permeable surfaces, ponds and ditches. Recycle water where possible.</p>
Earthworks	<p>Identify areas of existing landscape to be securely fenced off for protection during construction.</p> <p>Keep cut and fill to a minimum by reducing the size of levelled areas on sloping sites, allowing for tree or shrub planting on slopes between levelled areas.</p> <p>Consider where excavated material is to be put, off site or on site. If to be retained, ensure there is space for spreading to an acceptable landform, avoiding steep bunds with slopes greater than 1 in 3. Steeper slopes may be acceptable if storage bunds are short term only.</p>
Building design	<p>Design height and massing of buildings and colour of cladding and roofing to minimise visual impact on surroundings. Consider appearance of ancillary buildings and structures, including signage, together with main buildings.</p>
Planting areas	<p>Planting mass should be proportional to the mass of the proposed buildings - the larger the building, the larger the species used and the more extensive the planting areas. Ensure that there is space for planting, including 10 m minimum width landscape 'buffers' of woodland planting on countryside boundaries. Tree planting around and within parking areas is needed for shade and for amenity.</p>
Safety and security	<p>Layout should clearly define pedestrian and vehicular areas, public and private areas, functions of external space, access points etc.</p> <p>Avoid the creation of unused and hidden areas - where needed use shrubs which are low growing, and trees with clear stems. Lighting design and location is important.</p>
Accessibility	<p>To ensure that the premises can be used by all sections of the population, careful consideration should be given to layout, access and gradients, particularly on sloping sites. Barriers, gates and surfaces should be carefully detailed, and sightlines for wheelchair users (with a lower viewpoint) kept open.</p>

For further information contact:

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